

U. S. Department of Homeland Security
U. S. Coast Guard
Marine Safety Office Charleston
Marine Safety Information Bulletin

MSIB 26-04

June 28, 2004

**ACCESS CONTROL AND CREDENTIALING PROCEDURES FOR GOVERNMENT
AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL**

Government and law enforcement agencies have standardized the process by which their personnel access commercial vessels and facilities. As vessels have begun to exercise elements of their security plans as required by the U.S. Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, government access protocols have become relevant.

Recognizing that maritime security is a shared responsibility, the following steps have been agreed upon and will be adhered to by all government and law enforcement officials in the Ports of Charleston and Georgetown when attempting to access a commercial vessel or facility:

- (1) Verbally provide their name and organizational affiliation,
 - (2) Present an official government issued identification card at each security checkpoint,
 - (3) Sign the visitor's logbook and provide an office contact number if requested,
 - (4) Explain, if necessary, that properly identified law enforcement personnel on official business are not required to consent to baggage or government vehicle search.
 - (5) Explain, if necessary, that law enforcement personnel are authorized to carry firearms
- while conducting routine operations onboard a vessel or facility.

It is recommended that all facility and vessel security plans be amended if their respective approved plans conflict with the outlined procedures for dealing with government or law enforcement officials.

All personnel will fully expect to be approached for an identification check before being granted access to a vessel IAW 33 CFR Part 104.265 or facility IAW 33 CFR 105.255 respectfully. Vessels or facilities that allow access to unidentified law enforcement personnel could be considered to be in violation of the MTSA or ISPS Code, which could prompt immediate corrective actions by the U. S. Coast Guard.

Please note that properly identified law enforcement officials on official business cannot and will not surrender their government issued identification cards or firearms. Recognizing that some Ship Security Plans may not adequately address the access needs of government and law enforcement officials, policy has been established that these personnel will not attempt to "test" security procedures by fabricating or refusing to show credentials or by simulating the smuggling of prohibited items in baggage or government vehicles. If government or law enforcement officials refuse to show proper identification or vessel or facility personnel have

doubts about the veracity of a credential, they should immediately contact the Coast Guard Captain of the Port.

Law enforcement officers within their jurisdictions have the right to access vessels and facilities subject to inspection without delay or obstruction. It should also be noted that the procedures outlined in this letter do not apply to Coast Guard officers accessing vessels or facilities during emergencies or exigent circumstances in the performance of their duties.

We recognize that as we work our way through this initial implementation period for the MTSA and ISPS security requirements, issues may arise that neither security plans nor administration policies have directly addressed. The Coast Guard will not be taking immediate action against vessels in circumstances where the vessel security plan conflicts with government or law enforcement procedures, but we will be recommending that the approved security plan be amended to address proper procedures for dealing with government or law enforcement officials.

If you have any questions, please contact my Port Security Specialist, Mr. Jim Mahney, at (843) 720-3276.

/s/

J. E. CAMERON
Commander, U. S. Coast Guard
Captain of the Port
Charleston, South Carolina

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